

### Part III: "Death and Life" and Epilogue

by Tallin

Category: Quest For Glory

Genre: Adventure

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2000-06-11 09:00:00

Updated: 2000-06-11 09:00:00

Packaged: 2016-04-27 20:03:25

Rating: K+

Chapters: 1

Words: 9,345

Publisher: [www.fanfiction.net](http://www.fanfiction.net)

Summary: The final part of my Fanfic. Enjoy!

### Part III: "Death and Life" and Epilogue

Part III: "Death and Life"

><br>Chapter 13 - A Terrible Choice

><br>Salak watched the prisoner writhe and moan under the persecution of the Master. He would have

>been screaming, but his voice had given out long ago. Soon she would stop and allow him a<br>chance to speak, Salak hoped he would. He did not like to see anyone, even his worst enemy,

>whom this was not, suffer like this, but he had been told this was a reward for finding the harper<br>for her. You do not refuse the Master's rewards.

><br>Just then the Director came and put a cold hand on his shoulder and he could not help but shiver,

>and not from the cold.<br>

>"Breathtaking, isn't it?" The Director said in a voice that seemed it should belong with a snake.<br>"It's so rare to see a true master of torture, and the Master is indeed one." He chuckled evilly at

>his own pun. "Do you know that most people will pay much to see the torture and humiliation of<br>another, even one they do not know? I used to make my living off of ones such as these. Yet you

>get to see this spectacle for free, is this not a just reward for your effort?"<br>

>Ferrari knew that Salak hated to watch this. In fact, he was likely the one responsible for getting<br>him this 'reward'. Just then the writhing stopped and the moaning fell off to a small whimper.

>The torture session finally done, and Salak walked off with relief. He wouldn't have nightmares<br>about this, as some would, he could not, as his kind did not dream, but if they did, he would have

>many other things to have nightmares about.<br>

>\* \* \*<br>

>The pain suddenly stopped and Quiltan again felt relief, but he knew

it would not last. It was almost to the point of where he would tell anything if they would simply stop this torture.

>Almost. He thought he could hold on a few more days, not that he knew what a day was, and then he would tell all, though he did not know what he was supposed to tell. Or maybe he would slip away into insanity. It felt dangerously close at times. In fact, he had no concept of time, only pain. A day was measured by a set number of torture sessions, and he had lost count of those

>long ago. Time didn't really matter anyway, the pain could have lasted for years for all he knew, and indeed it felt like it. The world was blessedly without feeling for what seemed a few more

>moments, then the pain began again.

>\* \* \*<br>

>Salak opened his coffin, and climbed into it to sleep. It was standard for his people, after all. His people, what a thought that was. Ever since Katrina had sucked the blood from his veins he had

>known he would become one of the Nosferatu, but that didn't mean he had to like it. He did not like to take the blood of others, and curse them to a life like his, or worse, to the life of a

>Revenant, the zombie-like creatures, with no memory of their old life. Come to think of it, though, that may be a blessing in disguise.

><br>He closed the coffin, crossed his arms over his chest and fell into the dreamless sleep of a

>vampire.<br>

>\* \* \*<br>

>Tallin quickly went through another book, he was learning incredibly fast, and the wizards had no idea how it was being done. They had tested him on the knowledge, and not only was he able

>to recite what he had learned, and perform the spells, he was also able to extrapolate on it, thus proving that he not only absorbed the knowledge, but also processed it. Soon, he knew, he would

>have all the knowledge he needed to save Katrina, but unless it was in this last book, he would not find it here.

><br>It was not.

><br>With a thought, the book disintegrated, with another he brought it back. It was not its fault that

>the knowledge it contained would not help him in his current situation. The wizards had told him that every book of knowledge ever written was here, but he knew that was not true. There was

>one book they would never hold in these massive vaults, and it had to be the book he needed. It was the forbidden book, said to be written by the leader of the cult, containing all the knowledge

>she had at that time.<br>

>It had to be in that book, but he had no idea how to get a hold of it. He summoned the Elemental Wizards to him, as they were the instructors of the Academy for Wizards, the part of WIT

>dedicated to teaching wizards. He had surpassed them on the first day.<br>

>"I am looking for a book . . . "<br>

>"There are a number of books, all around, there . . . " The Fire Wizard did not finish his angry interruption, as he was summarily dismissed.

><br>"This book, most obviously, is not here, otherwise I would not

have summoned you." He paused,  
>to see if the others wanted to say anything, they did not. "You  
should all know of 'The Book of<br>Death'?" He waited for them to  
nod, nervously. "Do you know where I can find this book?"

><br>"Well, there are only a few of copies . . . " The Earth Wizard  
began.

><br>"Yes, I know, I want to know where one of those copies is."

><br>"Indeed, I believe one was destroyed . . . " The Earth Wizard,  
too, was dismissed.

><br>"Now, does anyone want to tell me where I can find an intact  
copy of the book."

><br>The Water and Air Wizard glanced at each other, then the Air  
Wizard spoke. "You may find one

>in the . . . in the Tower."He seemed to have a hard time saying  
this.<br>

>"What is this Tower?"<br>

>"It is called the iTower of Secrets. It has been unopened since it  
was locked by the first

>Master of the Tower, before the time of the Cult."<br>

>"But if it was locked before the Cult, how could the book be  
inside?"<br>

>"It is a little known fact that the book was written before the time  
the Cult was formed. They<br>then took it as their sacred book." The  
Water Wizard spoke up.

><br>"Then how will I enter the Tower . . . wait." He thought for a  
second, then recited:

><br>"Death will be sought, but not for its power.

>The Tower of Secrets will open again."<br>

>It was part of the prophecy Erasmus has told him about earlier. He  
had found the rest of it in one<br>of the books he had read. He had  
thought this might help with his search, but it hadn't panned

>out, now it looked like it might.<br>

>"So, where is this Tower?"<br>

>They told him and he did a quick teleport there. He stood in front  
of the door and tried a number<br>of spells to open it, but he was  
unable to. He thought for a second, and then he summoned the

>Staff of the Guardian to himself. Touching it to the door, it opened  
before him. He walked up the<br>spiralled staircase, to the room at  
the top of the Tower. In it were two books, sitting on pedestals.

>It seemed that two books of knowledge had been missed.<br>

>The first was "The Book of Death," the second could be translated as  
"The Book of Suffering." <br>

>He walked toward the books, but a voice stopped him. "Pause, Hero,  
and consider. The book you<br>choose will decide your future and that  
of this world. Choose one, and you will find the thing

>you seek, choose the other, and you never will, but you will find  
the thing the world needs.<br>Choose now and choose wisely."This  
voice sounded familiar, but he couldn't seem to place it.

><br>Tallin had hoped that "The Book of Death" would contain the  
knowledge he sought, the way to

>bring Katrina back, and indeed it seemed it would, but it would be  
at the cost of the thing the<br>world needs, for whatever reason.

><br>It was his choice, and a very terrible choice it was.

><br>Chapter 14 - Freedom

><br>The pain stopped and she came into the light. He had seen her before, but this time it was  
>different, he saw her, but instead of her shifting countenance, he saw beyond, into her soul. He<br>saw the darkness there, but besides that he saw a speck of light, a small particle of her soul  
>where the darkness could not reach. It could not destroy the last bit of goodness. <br>  
>He couldn't help but feel sorrow for this soul that was nearly lost to all virtue.<br>  
>The image disappeared and he noticed she was smiling. He did not know how to take that. She<br>spoke. "I have decided that I can now let you go. My plan has already reached the point where  
>you cannot interfere to stop it, so whenever you want to leave is fine with me. You have<br>provided me with great entertainment during this time and I feel I should reward you in some  
>way. Just give me a location and I can send you directly there."<br>

>He was quite surprised by this turn of events, but he managed to reply. "I would prefer to walk, if<br>you'll just show me to the front door..."  
><br>She interrupted with a laugh. "You could try walking, but I doubt you'd get anywhere, this place  
>is nowhere near anywhere, you see, and you'd soon be the snack of some hungry animal."<br>  
>"Well, then, if you could send me to Rasier, that would be fine."<br>  
>"Your wish is my command." <br>  
>As she finished speaking, he found himself in the middle of a noisy plaza, merchants and<br>customers speaking back and forth to one another, each trying to get the better part of the  
>bargain. He decided that he'd better find a way to get to the city of Shapier. He would have<br>asked to have been sent there, but he did not want to give away where he had been heading. He  
>also noticed that he had all his belongings returned to him.<br>

>That was the last thing he noticed before he found himself surrounded by the bending of reality<br>signalling most magic teleportation. He found himself in a room with an almost overwhelming

>aquatic theme.<br>  
>"I am glad you have arrived safely, Quiltan. Allow me to introduce myself, my name is Aziza. I<br>am sorry to have taken you from the plaza in Rasier so abruptly, but when I felt the magic that  
>sent you there, I immediately investigated and found you there. Your master told me you would<br>be arriving and he assumed you would find your way here at a faster than walking speed. Now, if  
>you would be seated, we can discuss what has brought you here."<br>

>He looked to find a sunken area with a table, surrounded by pillows. He walked over and sat<br>down, cross-legged, on one of the pillows as Aziza did the same.  
><br>"Would you like some tea before we begin?" Aziza asked.

><br>He nodded, "Thank you."  
><br>When they had finished the tea, Quiltan felt much refreshed. He had not had anything to drink  
>since the day he accepted the ride from the "farmer." He did not know he had survived since<br>then, in fact, he didn't even know how long it had been.  
><br>"If you don't mind, how long ago did I set out from my master's

house?"

><br>"It is no problem. It was on the fourth of this month, ten days ago.' She informed him. "You  
>have saved many months of travel time."<br>  
>Ten days ago, that would mean he had been under the torture of the woman for eight days, a<br>much shorter time than he had thought.

><br>"Now, onto why you have come here. I will tell you what I know of the True Music. It is more  
>than any other music, for while most music comes from the heart, and touches the heart of the<br>listener, this music comes from the soul and touches the same in the listener. It was known in the  
>past, though only the Master Harpers of the time could ever play this deep form of music, but the<br>art has been lost. It seems that many abilities often came with this art, or signalled the

>emergence of it. The harper first had to be able to see to the soul of his listeners, know them<br>beyond what others could, for you cannot touch what you cannot see."

><br>"There are other requirements, but this was the most important, as the others are common to any  
>harper. The only other thing I can tell you is that this and other abilities will only come out in<br>times when the soul is the clearest, the time when you see beyond emotions and the physical

>world. After they appear, though, they will become easier to call up each time you use them."<br>

>"There are also things that you will be able to do once you have found this True Music. You will<br>not only be able to see the souls of the listener, but you will be able to join them, as well, at least

>temporarily. It is not clear what this accomplishes, but it seems when the souls are joined, the<br>thoughts of the mind can also flow freely from one to another."

><br>She finished speaking and allowed him to ask any questions he had. He had nothing to ask so he

>simply said "Thank you. I will have to think about what you said, do you mind if I return another<br>time?"

><br>"I would be honored. I have reserved a room for you in a nearby inn, I will teleport you there,

>since you are ready to leave. Farewell."<br>

>He stood, said "Farewell", then was teleported directly to the inn.<br>

>\* \* \*<br>

>Tallin sat in his small cell. It was a uniform room that all students in the Academy were given,<br>with only a hard cot and a desk for private studies . Even though he could very likely get a better

>room, this one was good for concentration. It allowed him to think clearly, and not have his<br>thoughts interrupted, exactly as it was designed.

><br>He sat on the cot cross-legged and gathered his thoughts. He had just finished the book and

>received the information he needed to travel to Oblivion a retrieve a soul from that realm. He<br>had needed one spell in particular to perform this deed, and now he had it. He also had more

>reason than ever to continue, even knowing that he could very well destroy the world by his<br>actions.

><br>He got up and finished preparing for the spell. Gathering all the mana he could, he began a spell

>for summoning a familiar. It was not any familiar, though, for this was more powerful than any<br>other summoning spell. It would summon a familiar more intelligent and more powerful than  
>any other yet summoned, but one that was nowhere near as tame as any other. For while this<br>spell would summon the familiar, the wizard himself must show himself worthy, or the familiar  
>would rebel and destroy the wizard. Even then, the familiar would have its own free will, and<br>could decline to do what the wizard wishes. It was unlike any other in this way, for even  
>Erasmus, if he wished, could bring Fenrus under his command (or was that the other way<br>around).  
><br>He performed the spell. The world went black for a time, then the blackness shrank until it was  
>contained within a large cat-like shape. It was, in fact, a cat, a black leopard, to be exact. Its<br>limbs were powerful and they could likely kill him with a single stroke. Then golden slits  
>appeared, that turned into golden orbs, the cat's eyes. It stared at him with a gaze more intense<br>than any he had ever felt.  
><br>He stared right back. They stood there for some time, their gazes locked. The cat seemed to be  
>searching his very soul. After what seemed like days, the cat shifted its head slightly, not<br>obsequiously, but in acquiescence.  
  
><br>Now he had everything he required and needed only to prepare.

><br>\* \* \*

><br>As Quiltan materialized in the inn, his attention was called to a katta, who stood and greeted  
>him.<br>

>"Greetings, you must be the one the Enchantress spoke of. I am Shameen, your room has been<br>prepared for you in this, the Katta's Tail Inn, and, if you would be seated, my beloved Shema  
>will serve you a fine meal."<br>

>He was quite hungry, but he wanted even more to go to his room and just think. "If you don't<br>mind, I would like to go directly to my room. I have some things I need to think on. I will return  
>later for that meal, though."<br>

>Shameen nodded. "I understand, the words of the Enchantress need to be pondered to reveal<br>their meanings. If you like I can have food brought to you in your room so you may eat while  
>you think. Your room is at the end of the hall and to your right."<br>

>"Thank you, I will take the food in my room as you suggest." Quiltan walked down the hall and<br>entered his room. He sat on one of the pillows and thought of what he had found, and of what he  
>had yet to find while he waited for the food to arrive.<br>  
>\* \* \*<br>

>Tallin held the Staff of the Guardian clenched in his hand as the large black leopard prepared the<br>spell that would send him into Oblivion. The cat had no need of hands or complex words and

>gestures, its nature was inherently magic and thus it did not require these things. When it wanted<br>something done, the thing was done. Objects moved seemingly without guidance, things  
>appeared from nowhere. Then the cat padded his way in a straight line beside the Tallin and a<br>black line appeared in where it had walked. Five more and a five-pointed star was marked in the  
>floor, the age old simple for magic .<br>  
>The cat stepped away and with a twinkle in his eye, Tallin travelled. He found himself in<br>nothing. It was not just blackness,

it was a total lack of sight or any form of perception.  
><br>Then a light seemed to come towards him. As it came closer, he realized it was not one light, but  
>two. One was quite a bit dimmer than the other. He held out the Staff, which allowed him to<br>retain his human form and two figures appeared before him. The first was the one he had  
>originally come for, Katrina, the other was the Guardian.<br>>The Guardian spoke, 'I have found the soul of Katrina and we are ready to return to the land of<br>life.'  
><br>Then Tallin spoke gravely, "Thank you, Janar. I realize what this will mean, and I hope that you  
>will not hold it against me."<br>>"All has happened as it was destined to happen, you chose the only way you could."<br>>The void disappeared around them and all three appeared in the pentagram.<br>>Chapter 15 - Gathering<br>>Katrina spoke, "I had not to thought to have life again. I thank you for this wonderful gift. The<br>last I remember, I was dead, but my soul could not rest for love of you."  
><br>These words brought tears to Tallin's eyes. "I sought you for the longest time, and have thought  
>of little else since you gave your life for me. Every thought was sadness, but now more than<br>ever, for the price of keeping you with me is great." He told her of the cost, as he had learned in  
>the Tower, and the choice he had made. She nodded solemnly, but before she could speak, Janar,<br>the Guardian, interrupted.

><br>"I am sorry, but I cannot hold off her power any longer, she summons you to her and you must  
>go now." <br>>With that, Tallin was taken before the one who had, until this time, hidden her face. He looked,<br>and there stood before him the true form of the Mysterious One, not the shifting figure that he  
>had seen before. Looking on her face was like looking on that of an angel. She spoke, her voice<br>beautiful, yet with an undertone of malice.  
><br>"I thank you for bringing me that which I needed. I wish to reward you, but first I must take back  
>what you have been given." She smiled slightly, and he found that all the knowledge he had<br>gained in the past few days was gone. He could not remember a single thing, only the memory of  
>having the knowledge remained. "You see, I cannot leave you with the power you had, though<br>mine is much greater. Now, if you wish, I will send you to your ibeloved/i and I will allow  
>you to live happily ever after, or until you die. At that point both of you will become my slaves."<br>>Tallin simply nodded and was teleported back to his room. <br>

>The Guardian looked at him. "Good, you have returned, we need to gather the others. Where<br>should we go first?"  
><br>Tallin spoke slowly "I cannot tell you, I don't know what has happened in the last few days."  
>Then he saw Katrina and for a moment he could not speak. "Katrina, you have returned, I cannot<br>tell you how I have searched for you."

><br>She smiled sadly, "I know, you have already told me."  
><br>He spoke slowly "And I have no knowledge of our reunion." Then he brightened "Still, I love  
>you."<br>

>The Guardian interrupted "Hero, you must tell me where to go. We must gather them to us."<br>  
>"Whom must we gather? I told you, I do not know what you are talking about."<br>  
>"Three more we need to find. We now have the 'the one who died twice', from Mordavia, in the<br>Empire of Surria (author's note: Surria is Trassia, I was playing through QG4 and I discovered  
>that it is actually given this name in the game.), now we need three others, 'the finder of facts',<br>from Shapier, 'the one of True Honor', from Tarna, and 'the ruler of a kingdom not her own'  
>from Mergnay. 'The one who finds hope', from Silmaria, will not appear until a later time and<br>the 'Musicmaker' is being watched closely by her." He did not need to speak the name, Tallin  
>knew who was speaking of. "The last are you and I, we must complete the eight who will work<br>to stop the Great Evil."  
><br>Tallin nodded. "I remember Erasmus telling me of the prophecy that 'The Hero must join with  
>those of the six Kingdoms'. Is this what you are speaking of?"<br>  
  
>"Indeed, I am of the sixth Kingdom, Cartage. I also wrote this prophecy, but nowhere is it whole,<br>except in a book you once read. Now we must gather the others and prepare."  
><br>"Wait, what is this 'Great Evil'?"  
><br>"It is quite simple, she wishes to break the bonds of death and enslave the dead under her, as  
>well as prolonging her life indefinitely, by releasing my staff under the 'Carrier of Souls'. She<br>may also use the dead, who vastly outnumber the living, to also enslave those in life."  
  
><br>"But I thought she was already immortal."  
><br>"Immortal, yes, invulnerable, no. She can be killed, thought she cannot die naturally. She has  
>lived so long that she has very few weaknesses, and even those can barely be considered so. She<br>started the 'Servants of Life' because she wished to understand death, not for her own sake, but  
  
>to help others, to prolong their lives. When she was unable to do so, she feared it. It is unknown<br>to her and so she does everything in her power to prolong her life. She created a spell that took  
  
>the life of nearly every person in her kingdom so she would not have to face it. You may not<br>believe me, but at one point she worked more than anyone to help any person in need. You see,  
>what has become known as the 'Cult of Death' was originally what they are now called in scorn.<br>They were the Servants of Life." The Guardian finished speaking and turned away, but the  
>emotion in his gaunt face as he spoke revealed something of his past.<br>  
>Tallin turned to the cat, who was lying contentedly on the cot, staring at them through slitted<br>eyes . "Are you coming with us?" It seemed he did remember one thing.  
><br>The cat simply sat there.  
><br>"Let's go then. I believe you will find all the ones we seek are in Silmaria at the moment. To the  
>'Dead Parrot Inn' first.<br>  
>A moment later they found themselves there and standing right in front of them was the person<br>they sought.  
><br>"Ugarte, we need you to come with us."  
><br>"Excuse me, maj- . . . ex-majesty, but I cannot leave my business at this moment."



><br>"Listen, if you don't come with us then how you do in this business will mean nothing, not only  
>is this world, this life in danger but the next world, the afterlife is in danger." Ugarte swallowed,<br>as he heard the last part he saw into the robes of the Guardian and saw his spectral figure. He

>nodded, it was all he could do, as he could not find a voice.<br>

>Next they travelled to the palace. They went directly to the room where Rakeesh was staying and<br>found him there. He readily agreed to join them. After that they went off to find Elsa, which  
>turned out to be more difficult than it seemed.<br>

>Searching the Palace revealed nothing. They found Logos, but he had no idea where she had<br>gone. Ugarte checked with his spies, but they had not seen her all day. They began to search the  
>city, though the Guardian remained in the Palace. <br>

>They had searched the whole city, ending up by the docks, and they were just about to give up<br>hope when a small boat came into the pier. In it was Elsa. She stepped onto the shore and was  
>surprised to be greeted by the four of them. Tallin quickly told her of the situation. <br>

>'This is good, I could not stand this waiting any longer. I went to see the Sibyl, hoping to find<br>out something that would help. She would not speak to me. I returned thinking I would have to  
>wait more, but now you tell me there is something I can do. I will go with you."<br>

>They returned to the Palace and found the Guardian waiting for them.<br>

>He spoke. "Good, we have found those we need to find. Now, we need to go to Abanasia, where<br>the harper will meet us." He then put words into action and they found themselves there.

><br>\* \* \*

><br>Quiltan sat in his room. He had no idea what he was supposed to do, but he knew that he had to

>do it soon. She had said that there was nothing that he could do to stop her, but he could not<br>believe that. He did not know what he could do, but he couldn't let her finish her plan. Then

>everything seemed to come clear in his mind. He knew what he needed to do now, though he had<br>no idea how this came to him. He picked up his harp, left his room, thanked Shameen for his  
>hospitality, then travelled to Aziza's home.<br>

>He knocked on the door, then entered as the door opened and he was welcomed in.<br>

>"If you would be seated . . . " Aziza started.<br>

>"I am sorry, I do not have time at the moment, I need to speak with Erasmus immediately."<br>

>Aziza's eyes darkened slightly, but she continued. "If you will simply sit, I will prepare the<br>spell."

><br>Quiltan decided it would be better to listen to Aziza, so he sat. Aziza performed the necessary

>gestures then stared into the pool that appeared in the table. <br>

>Suddenly he heard Erasmus' voice, but it was not coming from the table. "You rang." <br>

>Quiltan looked around and discovered that Erasmus was standing beside him.<br>

>"Erasmus, I need to ask you about the prophecy, the one that is supposed to be about me."<br>

>"Ah, yes, I believe it is time I tell you. You see, there was a

prophecy, no one knows where it<br>comes from, and it seems to be incomplete. It spoke of a harper, also referred to as the

>'Musicmaker', but it told little beyond that he would find the True Music, and bring back the old<br>music, and that his parents would be unknown. Your master and I believed this to be you from  
>this and other clues in the prophecy. I have found things in a book I'm studying, and I believe<br>that this prophecy may, in fact, be part of another. From this book, I believe I have discovered  
>your true heritage, and I know now that you must travel to Abanasia." Erasmus went on to<br>explain what he had found, then prepared the spell to send him away.  
><br>"You have the Harp? Good. Off you go."  
><br>He found himself on the streets of Abanasia, as evening was turning into night, surrounded by  
>six others. Then a large black cat materialized with them.<br>

>Chapter 16 - Fox and Bird<br>

>"Good, we are only missing 'the one who finds hope', and we will be complete. Let us go<br>forward."

><br>They walked down the street, the Guardian leading. The rest of the group seemed somewhat

>nervous, especially Ugarte, who seemed to want to look every way at once. Tallin and Katrina<br>looked at each other and Tallin held out his hand. Katrina took it. Elsa gripped her sword tighter

>and Rakeesh simply looked more solemn than usual. The leopard walked beside Tallin, looking<br>more alert than usual. Quiltan was the only one who didn't seem to be affected by the mood. He

>appeared distracted, and kept glancing at the Guardian. No one knew what to expect. They found<br>was a door-sized shimmering portal.

Both Tallin and Quiltan, who had been here before, were

>surprised by this, while the rest, while not expecting it, did not find it unexpected, either. <br>

>The Guardian, seeing their shocked faces, explained. "What you saw before was merely an<br>illusion. I have dispelled that illusion and therefore you see it as it is. The portal was always

>there, and it was all that was ever there."<br>

>Tallin nodded, "So, who goes through first?"<br>

>"I will go. Wait before following. I will send a signal when it is safe to proceed."<br>

>"Right."<br>

>The Guardian walked through the gate and the rest waited. When nothing happened for some<br>time, they started becoming restless. Ugarte was playing with a dagger, flipping it in the air, then

>catching it. Elsa shuffled her feet nervously. Rakeesh stood there looking solemn. The leopard<br>was cleaning himself. Katrina and Tallin were the only ones who seemed not to be affected by

>the waiting, as they simply sat on some nearby rocks, holding hands and staring at each other.<br>Quiltan was even more restless than the rest, but seeing the nervous group, he decided it was

>time for some music, so he pulled out his harp and began playing a light and happy tune. Then<br>he began to sing the words. They were pretty silly, as it was a children's song, but it made

>everyone feel better.<br>

>i"One day in the meadow<br>A fox saw a strange sight.

>He went to tell the bird,<br>(And maybe have a bite).

><br>The fox said to the bird

>'A man is in the meadow,<br>Singing with his hands.'

>(How, he did not know)"i

><br>The song went through how the bird went to find a fiddler playing in the meadow and the fox  
>tried to make a meal of the bird, then the fox was caught in a trap, then was freed by the help of<br>the bird.  
><br>After the song was finished, Tallin stood and began to speak. "I don't know where the Guardian  
>is, but I feel it has been long enough. I think it is time to go through the portal, signal or no<br>signal."  
><br>Everyone became solemn again, though the nervousness and restlessness seemed to be gone, and  
>they all agreed with Tallin. <br>  
>"I'll go first, then"<br>  
>Stepping through the portal, Tallin was confronted with an overwhelming sense of danger. He<br>then saw that he was surrounded by more than fifty men. Searching his mind, he found he knew  
>a . . . spell? No, it was a new Paladin Ability. It was one of many now, but he didn't know how<br>he had obtained them. Still, this one would help in this situation, so he cast 'Awe', just as  
>Rakeesh came through the portal. Most of the men ran off. Only one remained, and murder<br>suffused his face.  
><br>Rakeesh looked at Tallin, "You have grown much in honor since we last met."  
><br>Tallin did not hear him. He was so surprised to see Salak standing in front of him. "I thought you  
>were dead."<br>  
>"Obviously not. You are stupid hero, indeed. I told you I knew Katrina, did you think that she<br>would not offer me the gift she had been given. The gift of immortality." When he said 'gift', his

>voice seemed even more sarcastic than it had with the rest. "Anyway, the Master has given me<br>the permission I need to kill you, so die, stupid hero." With that he threw two daggers. They  
>were slowed by the protection spells Tallin had prepared earlier, and could not penetrate his<br>armor.  
><br>Then Katrina stepped through the portal, and everyone stopped dead.  
><br>Katrina was the first to speak. "Salak?" She paused. "I see you have come into the legacy I left  
>you. I am sorry, you are still so young."<br>  
>Salak found his voice slowly, then spoke softly. "Katrina?" As he spoke, tears began to flow<br>from his eyes. Katrina stepped forward and surrounded him in an embrace. They stood like that  
>for some time, him crying onto her shoulder, as the rest of the group filed through the portal.<br>Elsa, then Quiltan, then Ugarte coming through, followed by the leopard. As they came through  
>each moved out of the way of the one coming through, then stood still, not wanting to interrupt,<br>though they had no idea what had happened.  
><br>Finally, Salak pulled away. He wiped his arm across his eyes to clear the tears, then turned to  
>Tallin.<br>  
>"You did this, Hero?" He nodded. "Thank you." After a pause, he spoke again. "I assume you are<br>here to stop the Master. She was warned when the other one came through, and was expecting  
>you. Follow me, I will show where he is."<br>  
>They followed Salak, and he lead them through hallway after hallway. Finally, in a dim hallway,<br>far from the portal, he stopped. Then Tallin saw why. Sitting against the wall, blood seeping  
>through his robe, was the Guardian.<br>  
>He smiled. "So, you have found 'the one who finds hope', and have

completed the seven." He<br>stopped for Tallin to hear what he had said. "Yes, it was always meant to be seven. I simply  
>helped to gather you together. You used to know this, but she took it from you."<br>

>"I am . . . " Tallin began.<br>

>"Stop, do not worry, you have already apologized. It is not your fault, I knew it would happen,<br>but I had to try. Now, let me speak with my son." The Guardian spoke the last louder than the  
>rest. Quiltan, who had not been able to see what was happening to this point, pushed forward as<br>he heard the voice of the Guardian.

><br>"Father, I didn't know until Erasmus told me. He . . . "

><br>"It's okay, just let me explain before I die. I loved your mother, you know. She was mortal, true,  
>but that didn't matter. She came to my realm, she had lost a child, you see, and wanted me to<br>return it to her. I could not, the child had already gone to oblivion, and because it was so young,  
>it had nothing to define it, to make it stand out from the others who reside there. I looked on her,<br>and I loved her, then. In the thousands of years since I became as I am, I had never felt such love.

>I tried to comfort her. I told her that her child was in no pain, but she could not be consoled. She<br>stayed in my realm for many years, and I kept her safe from the restless spirits. She came to love

>me as I loved her, and after a time she found she was going to have another child." <br>

>He paused, taking a deep breath and then coughing up blood from his punctured lung. After a<br>time, he continued "She knew that Hades was no place to raise a child, so she left to find you a

>home. That was the last I saw her alive. She returned to me as a spirit, and told me that she had<br>given you to be trained under a Master Harper. Then she asked me to allow her to join her child  
>in oblivion. I did."<br>

>He paused again, the breath going shallowly into his lungs. "Now, you must save my sister, your<br>aunt. You have seen what I have seen, her soul is nearly gone, but there is a small part that has

>not been taken by darkness. You must try to save her, but, barring that, you must stop her from<br>releasing the staff. If she does this, no one will ever again rest in peace." He paused on last time

>then spoke softly the last. "I go now to the one I love. Take care, son." With that, he died.<br>

>Quiltan began crying. He had found his father again and lost him in one day. Then the tears<br>cleared, the emotions were still there, but they were not everything. He saw the souls of those

>around him. Taking his harp, he began to play. The music at first seemed sad, but as it<br>progressed, the listeners realized that it was simply amplifying the emotions they felt at the

>moment. They saw beyond these emotions, and then felt as their souls connected with one<br>another. They were distinct people, yet they knew each others thoughts and feelings as their own.

><br>They moved forward as one, for they were, in a way, one. They came to an ornate door and they

>all knew what lay beyond. Then Quiltan moved to open the door.<br>

>Chapter 17 - Release<br>

>As Quiltan opened the door and looked beyond, they all knew. It was

the room Quiltan had been<br>tortured in, he recognized the stone slab in the centre. Now, on that slab was a metal stand with  
>five slender arched poles leading to a small platform, on which the blackbird was placed. Under<br>it, stuck into the stone, was the Guardian's Staff, surrounded by a pentagram, each point meeting

>one of the poles. The angelic being Tallin had met earlier, the leader of the cult, was chanting<br>slowly and methodically. As she chanted, the staff sunk slowly, farther into the stone. She did

>not notice the door opening, or those standing without, but someone else did.<br>

>They came into the room and were met by Ferrari. "You seek to stop the Master's plan?" He<br>looked at them all. "I know you all. The coward, the fighter, the paladin, the harper, the betrayer,  
>the one of death, and the hero." Ferrari grinned, his fangs displayed proudly. As he spoke, the<br>hatred pouring from Salak was incredibly powerful, and nearly drowned out that from the rest of

>them, even Tallin, though there was no emotion from Quiltan and little from Rakeesh. <br>

>Quiltan spoke. "Move, Despised One. It is not with you that we must intervene."<br>

>Ferrari's grin widened. "But it is I who will stop you. I and these others." Thirteen men stepped<br>out of the darkness. Each one with a smile on his face, exhibiting the fangs of the Nosferatu. The

>danger sense from all of them was incredible, and each had magic, to some degree.<br>

>Katrina brought a spell from her memory, and passed it to Tallin. They worked it together while<br>the others prepared for a fight. The spell would limit the power of the vampires. They would be

>weakened somewhat, the strength and speed native to their kind partly negated. They would also<br>be more vulnerable to attack. Then they cast another spell. This one would stop most magic from  
>being performed. Unfortunately, this would also affect the two who cast it, but would do nothing<br>against the spell cast on the Staff. Still, it would be a difficult fight, they were outnumbered and

>they still contained extraordinary strength and speed, and also seemed to be quite skilled with the<br>weapons they held.

><br>While ten of the vampires closed in on the three more powerful of the spell casters held back to  
>use their spells. They were disappointed when their spells failed to work. By this time damage<br>had been inflicted on the other ten.

><br>*Hold them off,* Quiltan thought, *I am going to try something.*

><br>Quiltan sat and played on his harp. Some said vampires were without souls, but he could see

>them, faint though they were. He played and captured their souls. Movements on both sides<br>stopped, everyone was caught in the music, everyone but Ferrari. He moved in with a dagger

>covered in poison, straight towards Katrina. She was the most powerful of the group, and<br>without her the spells would collapse.

After that he could attack Quiltan. He was untouched by  
>the music, his soul hardened beyond the power of it. The others felt as Salak saw him moving<br>towards Katrina, resisting the power of

the music, he stepped in the way as Ferrari thrust the  
>dagger toward her. With that, the five others began to move again,  
while Quiltan continued to<br>play. Salak fell, his last thought  
before the poison reached his brain was of joy. iKatrina, I am

>free . . . i  
><br>Katrina kneeled by Salak's body. "My friend, I am so sorry."

><br>The music took on a sad tone while they all mourned, all but  
Quiltan giving in to grief. Tallin  
>sank down beside Katrina, feeling her pain more so than the others.  
Ferrari brought out another<br>dagger and prepared to plunge it into  
Katrina's back. Katrina was overwhelmed with grief and  
>Tallin with her grief and his own, and the guilt he felt for not  
doing anything himself. There was<br>only one other person close  
enough to stop it. Ugarte plunged his dagger into Ferrari's heart. He

>fell backwards, the poisoned dagger falling point first, not towards  
Katrina, but towards Tallin's<br>back. A black flash moved, faster  
than lightning. The leopard landed, it's head tilting back from

>taking the hilt of the dagger in his jaws. Ugarte looked at Ferrari  
iI thought I knew who he<br>was once. He was evil, but not like  
this./i

><br>Then the Music slowly faded, though the effects remained. The  
thirteen stood there, unmoving,  
>still. Katrina stood, she seemed to have a new resolve, and the  
sadness was gone from her face.<br>Thoughts ran through her head, but  
the others did not understand them, could not understand  
>them. The other four still mourned the loss of Salak, but they were  
interrupted by Quiltan.<br>iHis soul is not gone, it remains still,  
though it has departed his body. I do not know why, I  
>can only assume the ritual or the power of the bond, or both, keep  
it with us.i

><br>They moved past the vampires now, towards where the ritual was  
being performed.

><br>"Stop" Quiltan spoke. The sound of his voice seemed to draw her  
attention from her work,  
>though the action earlier had not.<br>>She looked to him and spoke. "So the wandering harper returns. I  
told you there was nothing you<br>could do to stop me, but I see you  
still try. Very well then, I have waited millenia to achieve

>these, a few moments mean nothing." She turned to Tallin. "I offered  
you your happiness, for a<br>time, you will not receive the same  
offer again. I tell you now, leave with your ibeloved/i  
>and you will be happy until death finds you." He did not leave.<br>

>Quiltan spoke again. "You have already killed your own brother, will  
you kill your nephew as<br>well?"

><br>This seemed to touch her somewhat, but she still spoke up  
maliciously. "I did not kill the  
>Guardian, I did not have time for such trifles, and do not think  
that family means anything to me.<br>I would kill you or him if you  
had any chance of stopping me."

><br>Tallin spoke now. "How is it that this ritual works? If you  
don't mind telling me, that is."

><br>"It is quite simple. This blackbird is more than a statue. It  
was created long ago, farther back  
>than any can remember, before even the Staff. In fact, it was used

by the gods to create the staff,<br>which they then gave to a mortal who was trusted to watch over the Underworld. It gave them

>immortality, and power. Over time it also conveyed certain powers to the bearer. An ancient<br>myth says that the blackbird is, in fact, the one who carries the souls of the dead from this world >to the other. Whether this is true or not, I do not know. I do know that it contains great power,<br>and can be used to release the staff without also destroying the world. The power of the staff can >then be transferred to the one who performs this ritual and they will become immortal, and have<br>power over the afterlife."

><br>"Now, if there is nothing else, I need to return to my work."  
She again turned to continue on the

>ritual, but Rakeesh spoke up.<br>

>"Know you nothing of honor? Will you take the deserved rest of those who have lived life as best<br>they could, with honor?"

><br>She turned around and replied sharply with another question. "I ask you, who would want death, >when I offer them eternal life?"<br>

>Katrina spoke now, "You offer them a life of cruelty, to continue to live in a world where they<br>must suffer. It is like the life of a vampire, which I have tasted. A life that seems so much better,

>but in which you see only the dark side, never the light. I tell you, it is much better in the land I<br>come from. I returned for only for one thing. I returned for love. At first I thought it was for love

>of this man, but great though it is, I now know that I could never return to this life of pain simply<br>to be with this man for a few short years. I know in time he will come to me. I return so that

>those who found peace on the other side will not have it ripped away to return to pain and<br>suffering. I ask you not to do this for love of them." As she spoke, the others in the group

>listened, amazed. Even the cold, angelic face of the leader seemed to mellow a bit. Before she<br>could speak again, though, Quiltan continued for Katrina.

><br>"You do not understand death, so you seek to control it, or to prevent it. You have received the

>word of one that has been there that the life beyond is better than this life. Will you not allow<br>yourself and others the peace found beyond this life?"

><br>She shuddered, then swallowed hard. "I will let go." She seemed about to cry, but before she did,

>she turned to Tallin and spoke. "From you I took knowledge. I will return that which I can. With<br>it, you can reverse the evil rituals I have performed. You may release the souls of those I took to

>feed my own long life. You may release the Staff. You can release me to whatever afterlife I<br>deserve"

><br>She gestured, and he found knowledge returned to his head, knowledge he had known before,

>but had been taken from him. Still pieces were missing, pieces that she herself had never known.<br>

>He and leopard performed the rituals necessary, and the Staff was released from the stone. Then<br>they performed another ritual. The angelic face in front of them melted, the years moving

>quickly through her body. She died, then, her aged body falling towards the ground. Quiltan ran<br>forward and caught it.

><br>At a thought from Tallin, he laid it on the stone slab. Then Tallin performed another ritual, this  
>tie without the cat. Her body sank into the stone, much as the staff had. But this time it continued<br>to sink, disappearing into the earth.  
><br>They carried the bodies of Salak and the Guardian outside where they were buried in the normal  
>fashion, and they all stood around the fresh graves, not mourning their loss so much as<br>celebrating their peace.  
><br>Quiltan stood over the grave of his father, and spoke, for the bond was now gone. "We have all  
>learned things here, I don't believe any of us will every be the same, but we must continue on, to<br>help this world as best we can."

><br>Rakeesh and Ugarte nodded. Elsa replied. "I know I have learned much, though I did little.  
>Hopefully it will help me to rule my Kingdom wisely, knowing it will not always be up to me to<br>do everything. Still, I think I would like to put off death for a while longer."  
><br>At the same time, Katrina spoke softly to Tallin, both of whom were standing by Salak's grave. "I  
>have fulfilled what I have come to fulfill. I now must return."  
Tallin nodded, still sad. Katrina<br>continued. "You knew I would have to leave, once. You were the one who told me of it. Now it  
>is time, and I hope you can accept it like you once did."<br>  
>"I do not like it, but know I will meet you as soon as I can." <br>

>Then they walked hand in hand towards Quiltan. Tallin handed him the Staff. "I believe this is<br>yours now."  
><br>Quiltan took it. "I suppose so."  
><br>"Let's go, then."  
><br>Tallin cast two teleport spells. One sending Ugarte, Rakeesh and Elsa back to Silmaria, the oter  
>taking Tallin, Quiltan and Katrina to where the remains of a pillar stood crumbling by a stream.<br>The cat appeared beside him.  
><br>A simple tap with the Staff to a nearby cliff opened the gate to Hades. Out walked Cerberus, the  
>three-headed dog.<br>  
>"Hey, we got a new boss." said the first head.<br>  
>"You sure he's the right one?"<br>  
>"I don't know, looks kind of inexperienced to me."<br>  
>Katrina turned to Tallin and spoke. "Do not ask me how I know this, but one soul that came from<br>death must return to death. There is another who will suffice is in this role, if you wish to be  
>with me for longer in this life, and I know she would be willing."  
<br>  
>Tallin knew that he was speaking of Erana, but how could he take away one who could do so<br>much good for the world, and take his beloved from the world she wished to return to, simply for  
>his own selfish love. No, he could not do that. It would not be right. Tears came to his eyes, but<br>still he spoke, his voice breaking from grief. "I will not do that to you, or her."

><br>Katrina smiled. "Good, then take the Staff from Quiltan." Next she spoke to Quiltan. "I believe  
>your father knew Tallin would have the job after him. You are meant for other things."<br>  
>Quiltan nodded, handing Tallin the staff. "I knew from the moment I took the Staff that it was<br>not for me. I am not meant for this job, I am to bring the old music back to this world."



><br>Tallin's face brightened, tears continued, but now they were tears of joy. He knew this would  
>mean he could still go to Katrina. Her soul would be in his realm, where he could visit her<br>whenever he chose. She would be happy with him where she wished, and he with her.  
><br>iHere ends Part III: "Death and Life"/i  
><br>Epilogue - The Invitation  
><br>The Guardian had just returned from visiting Katrina. He was walking the Paths of the Dead,  
>insuring everything was as it should be. A black leopard was lounging on a rock alcove nearby.<br>  
>Suddenly, in a flash of light, a white envelope appeared in front of him. Wondering what it could<br>be, and how anything could be transported into Hades, he took it. Opening it, he found a small

>card, on it was printed these words:<br>  
>iFormal Invitation to <br>Festivities at Erasmus' Silmarian Residence  
>On the 25th of this month.<br>  
>Please RSVP immediately.<br>  
>Fenrisi  
><br>The Guardian smiled. iRSVP, huh?/i He held out his hand and small card appeared in it.  
>Then, on it appeared: <br>  
>i RSVP me, <br>  
>The Guardiani  
><br>He then sent it directly to Fenris.  
><br>Many days past, most of which he spent with Katrina. The rest of the time he was learning his  
>job. Then he realized it was the 25th.<br>  
>He decided to wear his normal clothes, instead of the robes he wore in as Guardian, and he made<br>sure he had his present.  
><br>He teleported and found himself in a totally black room. Then he heard the familiar voice of  
>Fenris. "Hey, kid, you're late. Quick, hide."<br>  
>Naturally, he cast 'hide' on himself. Then he heard another voice. "What's going in here? I don't<br>remember turning off the lights."

><br>Suddenly the lights came on, and out popped people from behind pieces of furniture, yelling  
>'SURPRISE'. Tallin just appeared. <br>  
>A 'Happy Birthday, Erasmus' banner appeared in a rainbow of colors and magic fireworks<br>seemed to go off everywhere.  
><br>They began to sing "Happy Birthday" as Quiltan played the music on his flute.  
><br>In came the cake, then, baked by Marrak. It looked like it was chocolate, but you never know.  
><br>Erasmus began to speak. "I can't believe you remembered. Is this what you were doing when  
>you were away?"<br>  
>Fenris replied. "Hey, just because you forget everything, doesn't mean I do. I've been planning it<br>for months. Makes you wish you didn't forget a certain someone else's birthday, doesn't it?"

><br>"Well, that response was rather ratty."  
><br>"What can I say, I'm a rat."  
><br>Erasmus was just about to make another reply when he noticed the presents everyone was  
>holding and was diverted.<br>  
>After all the presents were opened, and suitably marvelled over,

Erasmus walked over to Tallin.<br>  
>"I've been meaning to speak with you. You see I was searching  
through this book, and there was<br>this prophecy..."  
><br>iHere ends "A Quest for Glory: The Mysteries of Death"/i

End  
file.